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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - Al-Shabaab Stepping Up Intimidation Tactics

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Summary  
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¶1. Al-Shabaab insurgents since early May have stepped up intimidation tactics, to include abduction, mutilation, and beheadings, possibly signaling al-Shabaab's increasing desperation and further marginalizing al-Shabaab leaders. Civil society leaders, journalists, Transitional Federal Government (TFG) officials, and would-be al-Shabaab defectors in recent weeks have been the targets of public al-Shabaab reprisals. Our contacts tell us al-Shabaab's increasingly draconian tactics are likely costing al-Shabaab leaders local support and exacerbating tensions between al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam. End Summary.

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Amputations, Mutilation, and Beheadings on the Rise  
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¶2. According to media reports and our contacts in Somalia, al-Shabaab operatives are increasingly employing amputations as a means to intimidate and promulgate fear. On June 25, al-Shabaab militia inflicted double amputations on four young Somali men in Mogadishu, cutting off their right hands and left feet as a punishment for theft. We have since heard three of the four have died from their wounds. The incident was widely reported by Somali media outlets and our contacts tell us the four victims were not thieves but al-Shabaab deserters. Additional contacts report al-Shabaab militia on July 3 amputated the arm of an alleged thief in the port town of Merca.

¶3. According to a civil society contact that recently fled Mogadishu's Karan district, al-Shabaab militia in late June publicly tortured and mutilated 19 militiamen manning a Karan checkpoint. Our contacts report several additional cases of TFG family members and domestic staff being targeted by al-Shabaab operatives. In April, the brother-in-law of a Member of Parliament (MP) was reportedly killed by al-Shabaab militia on the road outside Baidoa. The al-Shabaab operatives then publicly displayed the man's badly mutilated body.

¶4. Reports of beheading have become increasingly common in recent weeks. An MP from Baidoa, whose husband was recently abducted by al-Shabaab, told us al-Shabaab on June 22 addressed hundreds of people at Baidoa Stadium and warned them anyone supporting the TFG would face the "slanted knife" - a euphemism for beheading. The same MP told us her brother was one of seven men the al-Shabaab accused of spying for Ethiopia and beheaded in early July. Press reports from June 27 stated al-Shabaab publicly beheaded three men in Wajid over suspicion of disloyalty. According to our contacts in the area, al-Shabaab operatives took two men in Wajid, Bakool region,

from their homes, beheaded them, and dumped their headless bodies on the road.

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Civil Society Activists and Journalists Targeted  
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¶5. Al-Shabaab appears to be systematically targeting civil society leaders and journalists. According to our contacts in Somalia, media practitioners, journalists, and civil society leaders are consistently intimidated and threatened. Recently, al-Shabaab shut down radio Mandeeg (Bulla Hawa district, Gedo region), arrested Radio Juba journalists in Baidoa, and warned Bulla Hawa residents against tuning in to a Nairobi-based Somali radio station known for its anti-Shabaab programming. According to our contacts, many civil society organizations have moved from Mogadishu to Nairobi because of security concerns and the few that remain in Mogadishu are increasingly fearful of conducting their work. In recent days we have heard several reports of al-Shabaab breaking into NGO offices and looting computers, documents, and mobile phones.

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Comment  
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¶6. We believe that these incidents, while anecdotal, indicate al-Shabaab is employing an increasingly systematic campaign of intimidation of its enemies. It is clear that al-Shabaab's tactics are creating fear among Somalis. However, we are also hearing numerous reports that al-Shabaab's tactics are motivating clan leaders, local administrations, and even some Hisbul Islam leaders

NAIROBI 00001540 002 OF 002

to further distance themselves from al-Shabaab. Our contacts close to Hisbul Islam leaders in the Juba River valley, for example, have cited al-Shabaab's draconian tactics as one of the major factors causing tensions between Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab factions in that region.

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